

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7716

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EXDIS

DEPT ALSO PASS AS INFO TO NSC WASHDC

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, XK, CS, VE, PN, NU

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH SOMOZA: 7 SEPTEMBER

REF: STATE 226426 (NOTAL)

1. AMB MET FIRST THING IN MORNING, 7 SEPTEMBER, WITH SOMOZA. IN 30 MINUTE CONVERSATION, AMB CONVEYED INSTRUCTED MESSAGE THAT USG WELCOMED CARAZO'S INITIATIVE AND THAT, IF ASKED, WOULD SO STATE. AMB EXPRESSED BELIEF THAT AN OUTSIDER TO THIS LOCAL CONFLICT COULD ASSIST POLARIZED PARTIES TO SEEK A PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC SOLUTION. AMB FURTHER STATED THAT THE USG WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE CONTINUED DETENTION OF OPPOSITION LEADERS--ESPECIALLY THOSE EMPLOYING NON-VIOLENT INSTRUMENTS (E.G., THE GENERAL STRIKE) TO EXPRESS DISCONTENT. AMB NOTED THAT THE STRIKE HAD BEEN DECLARED ILLEGAL BY THE GON, BUT THAT A REPRESSIVE SOLUTION COULD ONLY LEAD TO FURTHER RESENTMENT.

2. SOMOZA RESPONDED THAT HE HAD IMPRISONED THE LEADERS SO THAT THEY COULD "STEP DOWN THE LADDER"--E.E., THIS WOULD PROVIDE THEM AN EXCUSE TO BECOME MORE MODERATE. AMB REPLIED THAT IT SEEMED TO HIM THAT SUCH MEASURES BASICALLY ANGERED THE OPPOSITION AND DID NOT PERMIT IT TO SAVE FACE; WHEREAS THE MEDIATION PROPOSED

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BY CARAZO COULD ACHIEVE THE RESULT OF ALL PARTIES SAVING FACE AND FORM THE BASIS FOR A MEANINGFUL POLITICAL SETTLEMENT. I AM SURE YOU AGREE, AMB SAID, THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO STRENGTHEN MODERATE GROUPS IN NICARAGUA, AND A MEDIATION CAN BREAK THE STALEMATE AND RESULT IN THIS. SOMOZA REPLIED THAT IT WAS "IMPOSSIBLE THAT A MAN LIKE CARAZO, WHO IS NOT MY FRIEND" COULD BE A MEDIATOR. CARAZO SHOULD SIMPLY "KICK OUT" THE FSLN FROM COSTA RICA. AMB

RESPONDED THAT IT WAS DANGEROUS FOR SOMOZA, WITHOUT ESTABLISHING HIS OWN TERMS FOR MEDIATION, TO A PRIORI REJECT THE CARAZO INITIATIVE. SOMOZA ASKED, "WHAT DO YOU UNDERSTAND TO BE THE NATURE OF THIS MEDIATION? WOULD IT BE, OR IS IT, THAT CARAZO WOULD HEAR MY CASE AND THE OPPOSITION'S CASE AND MAKE A COMPROMISE, BINDING ON ALL OF US?" AMB REPLIED THAT HE WAS NOT AWARE OF THE PRECISE DETAILS OF CARAZO'S INITIATIVE, BUT, CLEARLY, THERE WERE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MEDIATION. THE FORM IMPLIED BY SOMOZA APPEARED TO BE A BINDING ARBITRATION, AMB SAID. SOMOZA TOLD AMB THAT CARAZO'S INITIATIVE WAS STARTED BY THE OPPOSITION HERE AND HE THOUGHT LITTLE COULD BE GAINED THROUGH IT. AMB RESPONDED THAT IF NEGOTIATIONS AND PEACE RESULTED, THIS WOULD BE A GREAT GAIN FOR NICARAGUA. NICARAGUANS APPEAR SO POLARIZED THAT NEGOTIATIONS SEEM IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT "GOOD OFFICES" OF THIRD PARTY.

3. SOMOZA SAID THAT FORMER AMB SHELTON HAD BEEN A MEDIATOR HERE AND THAT, IN A WAY, THE AMB WAS MEDIATING NOW. AMB IMMEDIATELY INTERPOSED OBJECTION TO SUCH ANALYSIS, SAYING THAT AMB WAS NOT MEDIATING, BUT WAS SIMPLY COUNSELING MODERATION AND SUGGESTING NEGOTIATIONS. NOW, BOLDER ACTION APPEARED NECESSARY. SOMOZA SAID THAT IN THE PAST, CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS HAD MET TO SOLVE COMMON PROBLEMS. NOW A "NEW MONOALITH" WAS SUGGESTED. BEFORE GIVING A FINAL OPINION ON THIS MATTER, HE WOULD HAVE TO DETERMINE WHAT THE CENTRAL AMERICAN CONSENSUS

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WAS, ADDING THAT THERE WAS A PROPOSAL FOR A CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS MEETING TO DISCUSS CACM ISSUES AND HINTED THAT THIS MIGHT BE THE FORUM TO DISCUSS NICARAGUA AS A MATTER OF COMMON CONCERN.

4. SOMOZA THEN CRITICIZED CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ, MENTIONING THAT "ZERO" HAD MET WITH HIM AND HAD TOLD PEREZ THAT SOMOZA WOULD FALL WITHIN SIX MONTHS. ONLY PANAMA AND VENEZUELA WERE PUSHING FOR AN OAS RESOLUTION, HE SAID. IF HE DID NOT HAVE A LOT ON EXPERIENCE WITH POLARIZATION AND CONFLICT, WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED AS ENDEMIC TO NICARAGUA, HE WOULD BE CONCERNED, BUT HE HAS CONFIDENT HE COULD OVERCOME THE CRITICISM.

5. SOMOZA ASKED AMB TO TELL WASHINGTON, 1) HE WANTED A DEFINITION, SPECIFICALLY FOR THE OPPOSITION, OF WHAT IS MEANT BY "PEACEFUL DEMOCRATIC CHANGE." WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR THAT THIS DID NOT MEAN

HIS OVERTHROW, "THE OPPOSITION WILL CHANGE ITS TUNE." 2) THAT THE SITUATION IS UNDER CONTROL HERE. 3) THAT HE HOPED THAT THE US WOULD ABSTAIN IN THE OAS AS A TRADE-OFF FOR NICARAGUA'S EARLIER VOTE ON THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC. (NOTE: THIS REFERS TO THE 1965 INTERVENTION. END NOTE).

6. COMMENT: SOMOZA APPEARS CONFIDENT HE CAN SURMOUNT THE PRESENT CRISIS AND HE IS RELUCTANT TO ACCEPT ANY MEDIATION WHICH COULD UNDERMINE HIS 1981 FORMULA. HE SEEMS UNAWARE OF OR DOESN'T CARE ABOUT THE EXTENT OF NATIONAL OPPOSITION SENTIMENT AND HAS DECIDED TO REPLY ON GON MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ADVANTAGES TO LET THE GENERAL STRIKE RUN ITS COURSE AND PETER OUT. AMB BELIEVES HE IS CONTEMPLATING THE POSSIBILITY OF

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TAKING THE SUBSTANCE FROM CARAZO'S EFFORT, OUT MANEUVERING CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS (WHO HE CONSIDERS INFERIOR TO HIM). AND POSSIBILITY MAKING COUNTERPROPOSALS IN A MEETING WITH CENTRAL AMERICAN PRESIDENTS.

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NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED NSC.

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